

For information on
12 June 2008

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Strategy and Measures to Tackle Family Violence

Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the implementation of the Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review.

Background

2. The Administration briefed the Panel on Welfare Services on the proposal to launch the Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review (the Pilot Project) at its meeting held on 14 May 2007. Subsequently, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) continued to consult stakeholders from different sectors on the scheme details through meetings, briefings and consultation sessions and prepare for the setting up of the child fatality review mechanism.

3. Notwithstanding diverse views expressed on the details of the review mechanism, it was unanimously agreed that a start should be made as soon as possible so as to accumulate experience for the formulation of prevention strategies. Therefore, the Administration decided to launch the Pilot Project in February 2008. An evaluation would be conducted at the end of the 2-year pilot period with a view to throwing light on how the review mechanism could be improved.

Commencement of Pilot Project

4. In early February 2008, the Director of Social Welfare appointed 14 members from different professions and sectors to form the

Review Panel of the Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review (Review Panel). The terms of the Members of the Review Panel run from 15 February 2008 to 14 February 2010. The membership list is at Appendix I.

5. At its first meeting held on 7 March 2008, the Review Panel endorsed its terms of reference as follows:

- (a) to examine the service delivery process of organisations/ departments concerned, if any, prior to the child's death;
- (b) to identify good practice, gaps and deficiency in related services, systems and multi-disciplinary collaboration that may be involved in the cases reviewed and to suggest improvements;
- (c) to identify patterns and trends through reviewing cases of children who died of unnatural causes in the direction of formulating preventive strategies; and
- (d) to promote inter-disciplinary and inter-agency cooperation to prevent child death.

Scope and Procedures of Review

6. The details of the scope and procedures of the review are set out at Appendix II. The Review Panel has decided to include all cases involving children aged below 18 who died of unnatural causes since 1 January 2006 (i.e. about 25 months before the commencement of the Pilot Project). This would facilitate analysis and comparison of the data on a yearly basis.

7. Cases that fall within the scope of review are divided into different groups according to the nature of causes of death, e.g. suicide, traffic accidents, other accidents, unknown causes. Members of the Review Panel will form small groups of three or four. Each group will conduct a general review on cases of similar nature, screen and recommend cases for consideration of in-depth review. Findings of each small group will be reported at the quarterly meeting of the Review Panel for discussion or endorsement.

Progress of Review

8. According to the information from the Coroner's Court, there were 47 cases falling within the scope of review in 2006. The total number of cases for review in 2007 has yet to be confirmed as the causes of death of a number of cases are still under investigation.

9. The general review by different groups of the Review Panel has commenced in May 2008. The second meeting of the Review Panel will be held in late June 2008 to discuss the review findings and to confirm the list of cases for in-depth review.

10. To facilitate the work of the Review Panel, SWD has set up a Secretariat to serve the Panel and the Secretariat has started collecting information on the cases within the review scope from concerned parties since February 2008. Responses from the government departments and other organisations concerned have been generally positive.

The Way Forward

11. The Review Panel will review as many cases as possible within the 2-year pilot period and publish annual reports with an overview of the cases reviewed without disclosing the details of individual cases or the particulars of individuals involved.

Advice Sought

12. Members are invited to note the progress of the implementation of the Pilot Project.

Social Welfare Department
June 2008

Appendix I

List of Members of the Review Panel of the Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review

<u>Name</u>	<u>Field</u>
1. Professor LEUNG Nai-kong (Chairman)	Medical
2. Ms CHAN Kit-bing, Sumea	Clinical Psychology
3. Miss CHAN Mei-har, Grace	Social Welfare
4. Miss CHAN Mei-lan, Anna May	Legal
5. Mr HUI Chung-shing, Herman	Legal
6. Miss HUNG Wing-chee, Anna	Education
7. Dr LAM CHAN Lan-tak, Gladys	Academia
8. Ms LAM Wai-ling, Leona	Education
9. Miss LEE Lai-wan, Maria	Child Education
10. Professor SHEK Tan-lee, Daniel	Academia
11. Miss TSANG Lan-see, Nancy	Social Welfare
12. Ms WONG Yu-pok, Marina	Accounting
13. Dr YIU Gar-chung, Michael	Psychiatry
14. Mr YU Wing-fai, Christopher	Parent

Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review

Background

Despite concerted efforts of the Government and Non-governmental Organisations in the provision of child welfare services, occasional child deaths have aroused public concerns. In consultation with the Committee on Child Abuse and with reference to overseas experience, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has launched a 2-year Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review with effect from 15 February 2008.

Purpose

1. To facilitate the improvement / enhancement of the current child protection and child welfare service systems.
2. With focus on inter-sector collaboration and multi-disciplinary cooperation, it is neither intended to identify causes leading to the child's death nor to attribute responsibility to individuals.

Objectives

1. To examine the practice and service issues pertaining to the child death cases;
2. To identify good practice and possible areas for improvement;
3. To identify patterns and trends for formulation of prevention strategies; and
4. To promote multi-disciplinary and inter-agency cooperation for prevention of child death.

Levels and Scope

1. General Review for all children under 18 who died of unnatural causes on or after 1 January 2006 upon completion of all criminal and judicial processes to avoid prejudicing such processes.

2. In-depth Review for cases arousing public concern and with implication on the welfare services system.

The Review Mechanism

1. A non-statutory Review Panel (RP), with members appointed by the Director of Social Welfare, will conduct review with secretariat support from the SWD.
2. The Secretariat will prepare the lists of cases within specified periods for General and In-depth Reviews, and obtain their information for review by the RP. The review is primarily documentary in nature. However, the RP may consider interviews with concerned parties when necessary.
3. Organisation(s) that had rendered service(s) to the deceased child or his/her family could facilitate the review by providing available information to the secretariat.
4. A child death register will be set up to facilitate the review, and for future statistical or research purpose.
5. The review findings and recommendations of the RP will be published in annual reports. Recommendations will be distributed to relevant parties/organisations for consideration and follow-up action.
6. No individual case details or personal particulars of persons or agencies concerned will be included in the annual report to ensure *strict confidentiality*. The information collected will be destroyed upon completion of review.

Enquiries

Secretariat
Pilot Project on Child Fatality Review
Room 721, Wu Chung House
213 Queen's Road East, Wanchai
Hong Kong
Tel. No.: 2892 5670
E-mail: srp@swd.gov.hk

May 2008